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## Synopses of Important Articles.

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THE PLACE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER IN MODERN LIFE. By P. S. MOXOM, D.D., in the *Treasury*, July, 1899.

If the work of the Christian minister were merely that of an ecclesiastical functionary, it could be easily and once for all defined ; but it is not. The preacher is not primarily an official. He is not the mere creature and servant of an ecclesiastical organization. He has a distinctly spiritual vocation that relates him to the whole people. His proper function is not formal, but vital. It demands the exercise of inspiring and creative energy much more than it does of administrative skill. As time passes, the ideas and mental habits of men change. With the increase of knowledge, new thoughts arise, new points of view are won, and new needs develop. The Christian minister must be the man of his time ; he must understand the life about him, speak its language, and sympathize with its aspirations and aims.

But it is equally true that the Christian minister should be also the man of all times. The truths of the spirit are eternal ; that is, fundamentally they are independent of temporal changes. The witness and exponent of these truths is charged with the responsible task of continually and freshly translating the things of eternity into the language of time, and of applying them to the susceptibilities and needs of the generation in which he lives. The true preacher, the man who is adequate to his time, has today a hearing which in numbers, as well as in thoughtfulness and responsiveness, is greater and more significant than ever in the past. And this influence is due to the spiritual message which he brings. The preacher's main function is religious, or rather spiritual, and to that main function he should subordinate everything else. He may draw upon all the domains of knowledge — of science, art, literature, philosophy, criticism, politics, and sociology ; all human learning and all human experience are his province. But from these he is to draw materials for a specific end, and this end is not mere popular enlightenment ; rather it is the salvation of men and their upbuilding in the spiritual life. The basic element of human life is the moral element, and it is with this chiefly that the preacher has to do.

Every preacher, if he is a thinker, will have a theology ; and if he

is a live man, his theology will be vital, never mechanical and never complete. He will have certain great spiritual principles which will determine the lines of his constructive religious thinking; and he will keep his mind open and alert. But his function is not to teach theology, that is, a logically coherent and complete body of doctrines. His theology, like every other sort of organized knowledge that he may have, will be instrumental to his main end. The theologian works in the realm of thought, while the preacher works in the realm of life, in the midst of its complex activities of feeling and desire and volition. The one deals with ideas alone; the other deals also, and primarily, with personalities. The Christian minister is a teacher, but his teaching is not to the end of mere knowledge or discipline. He seeks to produce in men enlightenment, faith, right disposition, comfort, and godliness. All his teaching terminates on character. In his hands truth is immediately ministrant to life. He aims at producing, not merely a certain degree of intelligence, nor even a certain kind of conduct, but a moral condition that has irresistible affinity for the highest intelligence and inevitably expresses itself in the best conduct.

And the method is determined by the aim. Thus it is not the minister's business, primarily, to teach ethics; yet he must preach ethically, with his mind informed and disciplined by the study of moral science, and his entire thought penetrated by the finest ethical spirit of the New Testament. Nor is it his business, at least in the pulpit, to teach biblical criticism, "higher" or "lower;" yet he should preach in full accord with the assured results of biblical criticism, and with the elevation and range and insight that a profound and sympathetic study of the Sacred Scriptures surely gives. More than this, at the present time, it is his duty so to teach the Bible that the transition from the uncritical and erroneous view of it which has prevailed, to the true and reasonable view which already scholars almost universally have attained, shall be made as easy and as little perilous for the church as is possible. I believe that no weightier duty rests on the ministry today than to do well just this work.

The entire article, of which the above is an abstract, will well repay a careful reading. We need a ministerial ideal adapted to present-day conditions. In the face of wide divergence of opinion as to what the function of the preacher and pastor should now be, Dr. Moxom has indicated with courage and insight some of the vital elements of this ideal. Can there be any question as to the general correctness of the view which he takes?

C. W. V.

THE DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS. By PROFESSOR W. M. RAMSAY, D.C.L., LL.D., in the *Expositor*, June, 1899, pp. 401-22.

Six years ago a series of papers upon this subject appeared in the *Thinker*, written by Rev. W. M. Lewis, of England. In these papers the theory was advanced that the epistle to the Hebrews was written at Cæsarea during Paul's two-years' imprisonment, the matter of the epistle being communicated by Paul to Luke, and Luke putting this matter into the form of a letter. This view Professor Ramsay has found very suggestive, and with a part of it he agrees. The theory of Barnabas or Apollos as author, he thinks, does not throw light upon the problem of the epistle, nor does the Domitian date, nor the date 64-66 A. D., which he formerly adopted (*Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 307).

The conclusions which Professor Ramsay reaches regarding the epistle to the Hebrews are these: (1) The letter was finished in the month of April or May, 59 A. D., toward the end of the government of Felix. (2) It treats certain topics which had been frequently discussed between Paul and the leading men of the church at Cæsarea during his imprisonment, and embodies the general impression and outcome of those discussions. (3) It was the epistle of the church in Cæsarea to the Jewish party of the church in Jerusalem; this implies that the writer, practically speaking, was Philip the Deacon (Acts 21:8). (4) Its intention was to place the Jewish readers on a new plane of thought, on which they might better comprehend Paul's views and work, and to reconcile the dispute between the extreme Judaic party and the Pauline party in the church, not by arguing for or explaining Paul's views, but by leading the Judaists into a different line of thought which would conduct them to a higher point of view. (5) That the plan of composing such a letter had been discussed beforehand with Paul, and the letter, when written, was submitted to him, and the last few verses were actually appended by him. (6) That the letter, as not embodying the thoughts of any single individual, was not completed by adding at the beginning the usual introductory clause of all ordinary letters, "so-and-so to so-and-so;" presumably the bearer of the letter would explain the circumstances.

In the August number of the *Expositor* (pp. 154-60) is found a reply to Professor Ramsay's arguments by Rev. George Milligan. Taking Professor Ramsay's own statement (*Expositor*, June, 1899, p.

420) that the epistle to the Hebrews moves in a circle of ideas "not contradictory, but complementary to, and yet absolutely different in nature from, Paul's ideas," Mr. Milligan thinks that it is then inconsistent to hold, as Professor Ramsay does in point (2) above, that the epistle "embodies the general impression and outcome" of Paul's frequent discussions upon these topics with the Christians of Cæsarea. Again, Mr. Milligan holds that the similarities between the epistle to the Hebrews and the later Pauline epistles, which Professor Ramsay adduces to show that Paul was thinking at Cæsarea about the same topics that the epistle to the Hebrews discusses, are hardly sufficient to prove so much. Further, Mr. Milligan objects to the interpretation which Professor Ramsay puts upon certain expressions in the closing verses of the epistle.

And finally, Mr. Milligan thinks that there is much strong evidence against the view that the epistle to the Hebrews was written to the Jerusalem church; the language (Heb. 13:24) "seems rather to imply that the writer is thinking simply of the existence of various leaders and various communities to all of whom he desires to send greeting" (p. 159). But if the destination was not Jerusalem, neither in Mr. Milligan's opinion was it Rome, but "a smaller body of believers, who owed their conversion to imperfectly instructed teachers, and who had continued to maintain a markedly Jewish type of Christianity" (p. 160). He does not suggest the location of these persons. Mr. Milligan argues that the main purpose of the epistle to the Hebrews "is not, as is so often stated, to prevent a threatened apostasy to Judaism, to which from their circumstances the Jerusalem Christians were peculiarly liable, but so to set forth the true meaning and glory of Christianity as to urge those who from their special circumstances were still 'babes' in knowledge to a new and higher stage of progress" (p. 160).

There is at present a revival of interest in the epistle to the Hebrews which promises to restore this important New Testament book to the attention it deserves. Its conception of the spiritual, universal, glorious, and all-sufficient character of Christianity is nowhere surpassed in clearness or confidence. It is, of course, the Jewish background of the discussion, the contrast of Christianity with a system of religious thought and practice now obsolete, which makes the book unattractive to many today. But its vital truth and power are becoming recognized once more. And a number of works have recently appeared which help us greatly in our study of the letter, such as Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1899) and the article "Hebrews" in the *Hastings Bible Dictionary* (1899); G. Milligan, *Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1899); McGiffert, *Apostolic Age*, pp. 463-82 (1897); Ménégot, *La Théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (1894); von Soden, *Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Bd. III (1892);

Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1889); Rendall, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (1888).

These writers take widely diverse views of the date, authorship, and destination of the letter, and the questions raised are very difficult and complex. The discussion is helped forward by Professor Ramsay's article, the conclusions of which are given above. As to whether the epistle was written for Gentile-Christian or for Jewish-Christian readers, a sort of national division of scholars appears, Schürer, Weizsäcker, Pfeiderer, von Soden holding for the former, the English writers for the latter, and Professor Ramsay joins them. The particular date and author which Professor Ramsay has now espoused have been seldom advocated, and while they relieve some difficulties, they make others. The argument does not seem to carry one beyond the position that it may have been so, while many considerations make a later date and another writer much more probable.

C. W. V.